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EXAMINER

NINO, ADOLFO

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2831

DATE MAILED: 09/15/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/660,062

Applicant(s)

FITZGERALD ET AL.

Examiner

Adolfo Nino

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 June 2003.
- 2a) ☒ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-24, 26-34 and 40-63 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 34 and 52-62 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9, 14, 16-19, 21-24, 26-30, 32, 33, 40-50 and 63 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 10-13, 15, 20, 31 and 51 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 04 November 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Information Disclosure Statement

The number 9 through number 14 in the OTHER DOCUMENTS section of the information disclosure statement (IDS) filed on October 30, 2000 will be consider even though they do not have a date, but the Applicants have admitted them as prior art which means that they have publication dates at least one year prior to the filing date of the present application. Moreover, the confusion of the number of pages of document number 14 has been clarified where it is only one page numbered 5-10. A duplicate copy of the form PTO-1449 is needed in order to initial the above mentioned documents.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-3, 21, 24, 26-28, 32 and 40-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Debbaut (US 4,634,207).

Regarding claim 1, Debbaut discloses a connection protector kit (24, fig. 2) for use with an electrical stub connection (30, 32), said kit (24) comprising: a) a flexible cap (28) having first and second opposed ends and an interior wall defining a cavity (fig. 2), said first end being closed and an opening being formed in said second end and communicating with said cavity; b) a gel (16) disposed in said cavity; and c) wherein

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said cavity and said gel are adapted to receive the stub connection (fig. 2) such that said gel is elongated and elastically deformed (col. 3, lines 4-54).

Regarding claim 2, Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 1 including means (26) for retaining said cap on the connection.

Regarding claim 3, Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 2 wherein said means (26) for retaining is operative to maintain said cap (28) in a compressed position (col. 4, lines 8-10).

Regarding claim 21, Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 1 wherein said cap (28) includes a plurality of expandable corrugations (col. 4, lines 8-10).

Regarding claim 24, Debbaut discloses a protected electrical connection assembly (24) comprising: a) a flexible cap (28) defining an opening and having an interior wall defining a cavity, said cavity communicating with said opening; b) a stub connection (fig. 2) including a pair of elongated, electrically conductive elements (30, 32) joined at respective terminal ends thereof (fig. 2), said conductive elements (30, 32) defining a crotch therebetween and extending through said opening (fig. 2), said terminal ends and at least a portion of each of said conductive elements being disposed in said cavity of said cap; c) a gel (16) disposed in said cavity and interposed between said stub connection and said interior wall of said cap; and d) means for retaining (26) said cap (28) on said connection; e) wherein said gel (16) is elongated and elastically deformed and applies an outward force against said connection and said interior wall (col. 3, lines 4-54).

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Regarding claim 26, Debbaut discloses the assembly of claim 24 wherein at least a portion of said gel is elongated at least 50% (col. 3, lines 4-54).

Regarding claim 27, Debbaut discloses the assembly of Claim 24 wherein said cap (28) is compressed (col. 4, lines 8-10).

Regarding claim 28, Debbaut discloses the assembly of Claim 27 wherein said cap (28) is maintained in compression by said means for retaining.

Regarding claim 32, Debbaut discloses the assembly (24) of Claim 24 wherein said cap (28) includes a plurality of expandable corrugations (col. 4, lines 8-10).

Regarding claim 40, Debbaut discloses a method for protecting an electrical stub connection (fig. 2), said method comprising the steps of: placing a cap (28) and a gel (16) over the stub connection (30, 32) such that the stub connection is received in a cavity of the cap and the gel is interposed between the stub connection and an interior wall of the cap (fig. 2); elastically deforming and elongating the gel about the stub connection (col. 3, lines 4-54); maintaining the gel in the elongated state such that the gel exerts an outward force on each of the stub connection and the interior wall of the cap (col. 3, lines 4-54).

Regarding claim 41, Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 40 wherein said step of deforming and elongating the gel includes the steps of placing the gel in the cavity and thereafter inserting the stub connection into the gel such that the gel is displaced by the stub connection and thereby elongated (col. 3, lines 4-54).

Regarding claim 42, Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 40 wherein said step of deforming and elongating the gel includes the steps of placing the gel in the

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cavity and thereafter compressing the cap such that the gel is displaced and thereby elongated (col. 3, lines 4-54).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 4-8, 29, 33, 44, 45 and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut (US 5,140,746) in view of Applicants' Admitted Prior Art (AAPA).

Regarding claim 4, Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 2 except for said means for retaining including a pin. The AAPA teach that it is known to include a pin as

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means for retaining a retaining cap as set forth in the disclosed specification page 1, lines 20-23 (lines numbers correspond to the numbers at left margin of page). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a pin as means for retaining a retaining cap, as taught by AAPA in order to provide a stronger means for retaining.

Regarding claim 5, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 4 except for said pin including a shaft and a plurality of barbs extending outwardly from said shaft. It would have been obvious matter of design choice to have said pin including a shaft and a plurality of barbs extending outwardly from said shaft, since applicant has not disclosed that said pin with barbs extending outwardly from said shaft solves any stated problem or is for any particular purpose and it appears that the invention would perform equally well with said pin have barbs or not having barbs extending from said shaft.

Regarding claim 6, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 4 including wherein said cap includes a pair of opposed holes adapted to receive said pin therethrough (page 1, line 22 of the specification of the AAPA).

Regarding claim 7, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 4 except for said pin being connected to said cap by an integrally molded bridge member. It would have been obvious matter of design choice to have said pin being connected to said cap by an integrally molded bridge member, since applicant has not disclosed that said pin being connected to said cap by an integrally molded bridge member solves any stated problem or is for any particular purpose and it appears that the invention would

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perform equally well with said pin being connected to said cap without an integrally molded bridge member.

Regarding claim 8, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 4 wherein said cap (28) is formed of a frangible thermoplastic elastomer (col. 4, lines 5-6).

Regarding claim 29, Debbaut discloses the assembly of Claim 24 except for said means for retaining includes a pin extending through said cap and said crotch. The AAPA teach that it is known to include a pin as means for retaining a retaining cap as set forth in the disclosed specification at page 1, lines 20-23 (lines numbers correspond to the numbers at left margin of page). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a pin as means for retaining a retaining cap, as taught by AAPA in order to provide a stronger means for retaining.

Regarding claim 33, Debbaut discloses a protected electrical connection assembly (24 in fig. 2) comprising: a) a compressed, flexible cap (28) having a closed first end and a second end opposite said first end, said cap including: an interior wall defining a cavity; an opening formed in said second end and communicating with said cavity; b) a stub connection (30, 32) including a pair of elongated, electrically conductive elements (30, 32) joined at respective terminal ends thereof, said conductive elements defining a crotch therebetween and extending through said opening, said terminal ends and at least a portion of each of said conductive elements being disposed in said cavity of said cap; c) a gel (16) disposed in said cavity and interposed between said stub connection and said interior wall of said cap, wherein said gel is elongated and elastically deformed and applies an outward force against said connection and said

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interior wall; and e) wherein substantially all exposed, electrically conductive portions of said connection are substantially completely immersed in said gel (fig. 5), **but Debbaut do not discloses** a pair of opposed holes formed in said cap between said first and second end; at least a portion of said gel being elongated at least 50%; and d) a pin extending through said holes in said cap and said crotch to retain said cap on said connection to maintain said cap in compression. The AAPA teach that it is known to include a pin extending through said holes in said cap and said crotch to retain said cap on said connection to maintain said cap in compression as set forth in the disclosed specification page 1, lines 20-23 (lines numbers correspond to the numbers at left margin of page). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have a pin extending through said holes in said cap and said crotch to retain said cap on said connection to maintain said cap in compression, as taught by AAPA in order to provide a stronger means for retaining. Moreover, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to at least a portion of said gel being elongated at least 50%, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

Regarding claim 44, Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 40 except for the step of inserting a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection. The AAPA teach that it is known to include the step of inserting a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection as set forth in the disclosed specification page 1, lines 20-23

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(lines numbers correspond to the numbers at left margin of page). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include the step of inserting a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection, as taught by AAPA in order to provide a stronger means for retaining.

Regarding claim 45, the modified Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 44 wherein the step of inserting a pin includes bending an integrally molded bridge member connecting the cap and the pin to allow the pin to be inserted in a selected location (AAPA at page 1, lines 20-23).

Regarding claim 49, Debbaut discloses a method for protecting an electrical stub connection (30, 32), said method comprising the steps of: providing a cap (28) having a cavity and a gel (16) disposed in the cavity; inserting the stub connection (30, 32) into the cavity and the gel such that the stub connection displaces and thereby elastically deforms and elongates the gel; compressing the cap to further displace and thereby deform and elongate the gel; **except for** inserting a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection to retain the cap on the stub connection and to maintain the gel in the elongated state such that the gel exerts an outward force on each of the stub connection and the interior wall of the cap. The AAPA teach that it is known to insert a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection to retain the cap on the stub connection and to maintain the gel in the elongated state such that the gel exerts an outward force on each of the stub connection and the interior wall of the cap as set forth in the disclosed specification page 1, lines 20-23 (lines numbers correspond to the numbers at left margin of page). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in

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the art at the time the invention was made to insert a pin through the cap and a crotch of the stub connection to retain the cap on the stub connection and to maintain the gel in the elongated state such that the gel exerts an outward force on each of the stub connection and the interior wall of the cap, as taught by AAPA in order to provide a stronger means for retaining.

Claims 9, 14, 16-19, 21, 30, 46-48, 50 and 63 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut (US 5, 140,746) in view of Marmy (US 5,821,460).

Regarding claims 9 and 30, Debbaut discloses the kit of Claims 2 and 24, respectively, except for said means for retaining including a clamp. Marmy teaches that it is known to include a clamp as means for retaining said cap on the connection as set forth at column 2, lines 25-30. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a clamp as means for retaining said cap on the connection, as taught by Marmy in order to provide a more secure means for retaining said cap in the connection.

Regarding claim 14, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 9 wherein said clamp includes first and second opposed walls (fig. 1 of Marmy) and a connecting portion (fig. 1, of Marmy) joining said first and second walls, said connecting portion and said first and second walls defining a cavity to receive said cap, said gel and the connection.

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Regarding claim 16, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 9 wherein said clamp (3 in fig. 1 of Marmy) includes first and second opposed walls and first and second latching structures on said first and second walls (fig. 1 of Marmy), respectively, said first and second latching structures adapted to secure said clamp in a closed position about said cap, said gel and the connection (fig. 2 of Marmy).

Regarding claim 17, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 9 including a flexible tie wrap (3 in fig. 1 of Marmy) to secure said clamp in a closed position about said cap, said gel and the connection (fig. 2 of Marmy).

Regarding claim 18, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 17 wherein said clamp includes first and second opposed walls and first and second passages defined in said first and second walls, respectively, said first and second passages adapted to receive said tie wrap (fig. 3BB of Marmy).

Regarding claim 19, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 9 wherein said clamp (3 in fig. 1 of Marmy) includes separable first and second members (the ends of 3) and each of said first and second members has first and second latch structures on either end thereof (fig. 1 of Marmy), said first and second latch structures of said first member being interlockable with said first and second latch structures of said second member to secure said first and second members together and about said cap, said gel and the connection (fig. 2 of Marmy).

Regarding claim 21, the modified Debbaut discloses the kit of claim 1 wherein said cap (2 in fig. 1 of Marmy) includes a plurality of expandable corrugations (5 in fig. 1 of Marmy).

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Regarding claim 46, Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 40 except for the step of securing a clamp about the cap. Marmy teaches that it is known to include the step of securing a clamp about the cap as set forth at column 2, lines 25-30. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to the step of securing a clamp about the cap, as taught by Marmy in order to provide a more secure means for retaining said cap in the connection.

Regarding claim 47, Debbaut discloses the method of claim 40 except for including the step of expanding the cap to accommodate the stub connection. Marmy teaches that it is known to expand the cap to accommodate a stub connection as set forth at fig. 1. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to expand the cap to accommodate a stub connection, as taught by Marmy in order to provide a easier access into the cavity of the cap.

Regarding claim 48, the modified Debbaut discloses the method of claim 47 wherein said step of expanding includes the step of expanding corrugations in the cap (fig. 1 of Marmy).

Regarding claim 50, Debbaut discloses a method for protecting an electrical stub connection (30, 32), said method comprising the steps of providing a cap (28) having a cavity and a gel (16) disposed in the cavity; inserting the stub connection into the cavity and the gel such that the stub connection displaces and thereby elastically deforms and elongates the gel; compressing the cap to further displace and thereby deform and elongate the gel; **except for** securing a clamp about the cap to retain the cap on the stub connection and to maintain the gel in the elongated state such that the gel exerts

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an outward force on each of the stub connection and the interior wall of the cap. Marmy teaches that it is known to include the step of securing a clamp about the cap as set forth at column 2, lines 25-30. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to the step of securing a clamp about the cap, as taught by Marmy in order to provide a more secure means for retaining said cap in the connection.

Regarding claim 63 (New), Debbaut discloses a connection protector kit (24 in fig. 2) for use with an electrical stub connection, said kit comprising: a) a flexible cap (28) having first and second opposed ends and an interior wall defining, a cavity, said first end being closed and an opening being formed in said second end and communicating with said cavity; b) a gel (16) disposed in said cavity; c) means (26) for retaining said cap on the connection; and d) wherein said cavity and said gel are adapted to receive the stub connection; **except for** said means for retaining including a clamp and e) wherein said clamp includes fully separable first and second members and each of said first and second members has first and second latch structures on either end thereof, said first and second latch structures of said first member being interlockable with said first and second latch structures of said second member to secure said first and second members together and about said cap, said gel and the connection. Marmy teaches that it is known to include a clamp as means for retaining said cap on the connection and e) wherein said clamp includes fully separable first and second members and each of said first and second members has first and second latch structures on either end thereof, said first and second latch structures of said first

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member being interlockable with said first and second latch structures of said second member to secure said first and second members together and about said cap, said gel and the connection as set forth at column 2, lines 25-30. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a clamp as means for retaining said cap on the connection and e) wherein said clamp includes fully separable first and second members and each of said first and second members has first and second latch structures on either end thereof, said first and second latch structures of said first member being interlockable with said first and second latch structures of said second member to secure said first and second members together and about said cap, said gel and the connection, as taught by Marmy in order to provide a more secure means for retaining said cap in the connection.

Claims 22, 23, 26 and 43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut (US 5,140,746).

Regarding claim 22, Debbaut discloses the kit (24) of Claim 1 except for said cap being formed of a material having a flexural modulus of between about 5,000 and 100,000 psi and a durometer of between about 40 Shore A and 90 Shore D. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have said cap being formed of a material having a flexural modulus of between about 5,000 and 100,000 psi and a durometer of between about 40 Shore A and 90 Shore D, since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to

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select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. In re Leshin, 125 USPQ416.

Regarding claim 23, Debbaut discloses the kit of Claim 1 except for said gel having a Volland hardness of between about 5 and 10 grams force, an elongation of at least 100%, a stress relaxation of no more than 50%, and a tack of greater than about 6 grams. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have said gel having a Volland hardness of between about 5 and 10 grams force, an elongation of at least 100%, a stress relaxation of no more than 50%, and a tack of greater than about 6 grams, since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. In re Leshin, 125 USPQ416.

Regarding claim 26, Debbaut discloses the assembly of Claim 24 except for at least a portion of said gel being elongated at least 50%. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to at least a portion of said gel being elongated at least 50%, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

Regarding claim 43, Debbaut discloses the method of Claim 40 except for said step of deforming and elongating the gel includes elongating at least a portion of the gel by at least 50%. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have said step of deforming and elongating the gel includes elongating at least a portion of the gel by at least 50%, since it has been held

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that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-23, 24, 26-30, 32, 33 and 40-50 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 34 and 52-62 are allowed.

Claims 10-13, 15, 20, 31 and 51 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The primary reason for the indication of the allowability of claim 34 is the inclusion therein of the limitation of "first and second opposed locating projections extending inwardly from said first and second opposed walls, said first and second locating projections disposed in said first and second opposed inwardly extending corrugations" in combination with the other claim limitations. This limitation was neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art, alone or in combination.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably

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accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: With respect to claims 10 and 11, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not disclose nor teach the limitation of "said clamp includes at least one inwardly extending locating projection" in combination with the other claim limitations.

With respect to claims 12 and 13, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not disclose nor teach the limitation of "wherein said clamp includes first and second opposed, inwardly extending locating projections" in combination with the other claim limitations.

With respect to claim 15, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not disclose nor teach the limitation of "wherein said clamp includes first and second opposed walls and a living hinge joining said first and second walls" in combination with the other claim limitations.

With respect to claim 20, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not disclose nor teach the limitation of "wherein said cap includes an outwardly extending positioning projection and said clamp has a locating hole defined therein and adapted to receive said positioning projection" in combination with the other claim limitations.

With respect to claim 31, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not disclose nor teach the limitation of "wherein said clamp includes at least one inwardly extending locating projection" in combination with the other claim limitations.

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With respect to claim 51, the prior art, alone or in combination, does not discloses nor teach the limitation of "wherein said step of securing a clamp includes inserting a locating projection of the clamp into a crotch of the stub connection" in combination with the other claim limitations.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Adolfo Nino whose telephone number is (703) 305-1071. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:30-5:00).

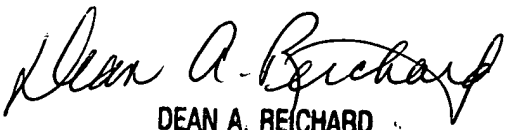
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Dean A Reichard can be reached on (703) 308-3682. The fax phone

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number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0956.

AN

 9/11/03
DEAN A. REICHARD
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800